

Bluegrass Guard



Vol. 21, Issue 3 - October 2018

Serving the men and women of Kentucky's Army and Air National Guard

TRAIN TO SAVE

WILDCAT DUSTOFF

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IMPRESSES IN
MAJOR EXERCISE**

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**Strike a pose to
improve your run**

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AROUND THE GUARD

AND IN OUR PAGES



ON THE COVER - A Soldier with Detachment 1, Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 238th Aviation Regiment descends from a UH-60 Blackhawk during medical air evacuation training near Morehead, Ky., July 26.
Photo by Staff Sgt. Benjamin Crane



JFHQ - Maj. Gen. Stephen Hogan and other members of the command staff cut the ribbon to open the new Boone National Guard Center Gym, July 10 in Frankfort.



123rd AW - Jonathan Jones welcomes his father home to the Kentucky Air National Guard Base in Louisville, Ky., July 4. Master Sgt. Paul Jones, a loadmaster in the 123rd Airlift Wing, was one of more than 60 Air Guardsmen returning from a four-month deployment to the Persian Gulf in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.



238th RTI - Instructors at the 238th hosted members of the Djibouti military, Aug. 15-17 at the Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center in Greenville, Ky., to share best practices in military training.



138th FAB - The 1st Battalion, 623rd Field Artillery integrated with more than 18,000 participants from 19 allied countries during Saber Strike 18 June 3-15 in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.



75th TC - Soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry participate in Physical Readiness Training during the 2nd AXE Camp in Artemus, Ky., June 13. The 2nd AXE (Attack Exercise though Education) Camp for Kentucky Guardsmen followed up the original in March to measure the success of the fitness camp.



63rd TAB - Chief Warrant Officer Anthony Villier was promoted to the rank of CW5 by his family during a ceremony in Frankfort, Ky., June 22. Villier is just the ninth CW5 currently serving in the Kentucky National Guard.



149th MEB - The 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (MEB), bid farewell to Col. Alexander Stewart II and welcomed Col. Joseph H. Gardner II as the new brigade commander during a change of command ceremony, June 23 at Eastern Kentucky University's Roy Kidd Stadium in Richmond, Ky.



BLUEGRASS GUARD

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- 19 Armor returns to Ft. Knox

613th Engineers provide unique capabilities overseas



By Capt. Melanie Nelson



Soldiers in the National Guard and Army Reserve bring unique capabilities from their civilian occupations when they deploy. At Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, a couple brothers with the Kentucky Army National Guard are able to tap into their professional occupation as engineers while serving Area Support Group-Kuwait Directorate of Public Works (DPW).

The Parker brothers are members of the 613th Engineering Facilities Detachment headquartered in Springfield, Kentucky. While deployed the two are tapping into their civilian engineering backgrounds to make contracts a little tighter, and things a little better for service members in Kuwait.

“Due to operational requirements, Area Support Group- Kuwait relies on the National Guard and Reserve components to complete its mission,” said U.S. Army Col. Shannon Nielsen, commander of Area Support Group-Kuwait. “These multi-component Soldiers bring a specialized capability to our team.”

“It has been a unique opportunity for me to use what I do in the civilian world in order to really do some good,” said U.S. Army

Staff Sgt. Bryan Parker, DPW’s projects noncommissioned officer in charge.

His brother U.S. Army Capt. William Parker is the project officer for DPW. The brothers both serve as contract officer representatives, the on-sight adviser to government contractors.

“My civilian employer is Louisville Gas & Electric and Kentucky Utilities in Louisville, Kentucky. I am an environmental engineer within the company’s environmental affairs department,” said Bryan Parker. “Being the environmental contract officer representative at DPW, allows me to use my knowledge and experience to make an impact on the operations in Kuwait.

In an office down the hall is the elder of the two brothers. “My electrical engineering comes very handy being the diesel generator contracting officer representative,” said William Parker.

“I am also a project manager,” said William Parker. “Because of that, I am usually given projects that are mostly electrical as my knowledge in electrical theory and standards come in handy to make sure the contractor is delivering the correct products.”

The support of their employers back home makes deployments possible. “I get support from the people I work with, a lot of them are veterans themselves,” said Bryan Parker. “The company is also supplementing my salary while I’ve been on orders. This is a huge benefit the company provides and their support of the National Guard and Reserves is one of the primary reasons I wanted to work there.”

“Serving in the military is definitely a family business with our family,” said Bryan Parker. “Our father, William Parker Sr. recently retired from the Kentucky Army National Guard as a Chief Warrant Officer 3 with over 30 years of service.”

Additionally, their brother, Bryan’s twin, is also a staff sergeant in the Kentucky Army National Guard. Also, Bryan’s wife is a first sergeant in the Army Reserve.

All 15 Soldiers deployed with the 613th Engineering Facilities Detachment headquartered in Springfield, Kentucky, are serving in roles for Area Support Group-Kuwait Directorate of Public Works.

LETTER TO EDITOR POLICY

The Bluegrass Guard values opinions

To comment, keep remarks under 150 words, include your name, rank and address and send them to:

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♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

We reserve the right to edit letters for tone, length, clarity and factual accuracy.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Don't miss an issue

All change of address requests should be made by the unit clerk using RCAS for all current Army or Air National Guardsmen. The Bluegrass Guard is mailed out via alert roster addresses at the unit level.

Army Retiree address changes should be made through the Kentucky National Guard Personnel Services Branch at 502-607-1497.

Air Retirees should request changes through retired Chief Master Sgt. James Turpin at jturpin1945@gmail.com.



GRINDING TO SUCCESS

KENTUCKY'S TOP NCO TO COMPETE IN ALL-ARMY BEST WARRIOR COMPETITION

By Sgt. 1st Class Scott Raymond

"Honestly, I did not want to compete. When I was asked about competing for battalion I turned it down and my first sergeant (1st Sgt. Larry Butte) sent me a text saying 'Too bad Brewer, I wasn't asking.' Ideally this is what every Soldier in the military needs, leadership that will always continue to push them and improve them."

That was Sgt. Jordy Brewer's response to why he wanted to compete in the first place.

The infantryman from Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry is now the Army National Guard's NCO of the Year after winning the national Best Warrior Competition July 27 at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.

"The last few months have been a journey," Brewer said. "Some days it feels like I've been on this road forever and other days it feels like I just graduated Ranger School. It has been nothing but a blessing though and I have really enjoyed myself, my opportunities to improve, and the fact that I have been winning."

That road began in the fall of 2017 when Butte "voluntold" Brewer he would be representing the infantry battalion and competing in Kentucky's Best Warrior Competition. Brewer said he was "surrounded by fierce competition," but prevailed through rain and sub-freezing temperatures to be named Kentucky's top NCO.

"When I approached Sgt. Brewer about representing Alpha Company in the competition he stated that he was only recovered to maybe 80% from Ranger School and that it might be best to select someone else," said Butte. "I convinced him to go. He's still pretty tough to beat at 80%."

"Sgt. Brewer has accomplished a lot in the last couple years, but the way he has represented himself and the battalion throughout these

competitions is a true testament to the type of person and Soldier he is," Butte added.

NCO of the Year wasn't the only title Brewer was eyeing at the time. A short six months later, he lined up with some of the Army's most elite Soldiers in the first event of the 2018 Best Ranger Competition (BRC) at Fort Benning, Georgia. Brewer and his teammate, Spc. Jan Wolfisberg of the Washington National

Guard were among the few Guardsmen in the 100-man field for the event. Team 47 held their own for two days of grueling competition, barely missing the cut for the third and final day, placing 18th out of 52 teams.

An even shorter nine days later, Brewer was off to represent Kentucky at the National Guard Region III Best Warrior in Tullahoma, Tennessee. In a first for the Kentucky Guard, Brewer won and advanced to the nationals.

"I was there but often wondered if I was supposed to be there," he said. "I have to work on being more confident. Not that my recent thought process was wrong, there is nothing wrong with humility or maybe it's the fact that I've always dreamed of being where I am now that it is so surreal to see it happening."

Brewer said he questioned his motivation at Best Ranger and lacked confidence, but then at the pistol shot to begin the first event, he saw his mom (Lynn Brewer) on the sidelines cheering him on. It was the spark he needed. Spectators would call his family the "Brew Crew" during their time watching him compete.

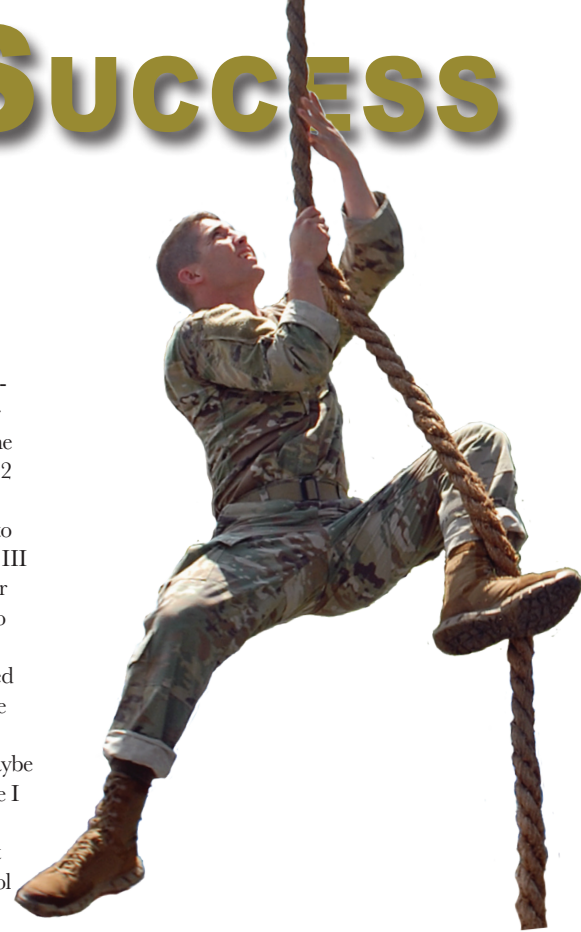
"My family has been nothing short of amazing during this entire process," Brewer said. "It is only natural for a family to be greedy about time spent together but they have been very empathetic for my goals, my career, and myself. They are my backbone

and my reason to keep pushing when the tank is empty."

For nationals, his mother, aunt, and cousin drove 9 hours to watch him compete, attending every event possible. Brewer's uncle, aunt and two cousins changed their vacation travel plans so they could catch the last day of competition in Pennsylvania. "My family being there for me when I walked onto the stage meant everything to me," he said.

And the grind continues for Brewer. He will begin training for the All-Army Best Warrior to be held in Virginia in September. The focus of his training is balance. Ensuring he is in the best physical shape is the key he believes.

"I don't train to be good at certain events and think I can relax a little in others. I train to be balanced and my natural competitive desire fuels me to be the best at anything I can be and everything. More or less, I



really focus on training physically."

"This doesn't just help for physical events but even technical tasks. These competitions don't have breaks and during these competitions your body and mind wears down. By being in better shape my body and mind will not be as impaired at the end of the five-mile run and disassembling an M240 will be clock work as usual or even the perspective of running five miles and three hours later putting in eight more miles during a land navigation course. When it comes to competitions physical shape plays a huge role in everything."

Brewer thanked all levels of leadership in Kentucky for all the encouragement he received from his chain of command and said he couldn't have asked for better support. Numerous Soldiers from the infantry battalion to State Command Sgt. Maj. David Munden provided assistance and guidance throughout Brewer's journey.

"We are so very proud of Sgt. Brewer and each of his accomplishments, and we're grateful that he is part of our Kentucky Guard family," said Munden, who was also a spectator at each of the Best Warrior competitions.

"Sgt. Brewer is an outstanding NCO. His competitive drive is simply amazing, and serves as an inspiration for all Soldiers. He has achieved beyond all expectations," Munden said.

"Overall my focus daily is to grind, improve, stay positive and let everything work itself out, 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and he will make your paths straight.' Proverbs 3:5."



READ FULL STORY AT [KENTUCKYGUARD.COM](http://kentuckyguard.com)



Strike a **POSE**

The Pose The 'S' Position. Shoulders, hips and support ankle are aligned while standing on the ball of one foot. Body is slightly leaning forward. The elevated foot is relaxed and in line with the support calf, while the knee is bent and facing downward.

The Fall Allow gravity to make you fall slightly forward while maintaining the Pose position.

The Pull Engage your hamstrings to pull your support foot off the ground, picking up the ankle in a vertical line underneath the hips, and land on opposite ball of foot. Your foot should land directly under your hips, and your body should return to the Pose position. The goal is for minimum contact time with the ground.

How does being physically fit help in your military job?

Being physically fit helps me mentally as well as physically with my military job. Being a recruiter, wife and mother, working out helps me to stay sane, energized and motivated! It's my escape, and that hour or so a day that is focused solely on myself gives me the mental toughness, confidence and clarity to then deal with anything that comes my way. Obviously being physically fit helps with the long days on my feet, and being able to jump into a ruck march or land navigation training without feeling fatigued, but the mental benefits is really what helps in my day to day job the most.

What are your keys to success for maintaining physical fitness?

I believe the key to success is prioritization. Either it is important to you or it's not. We all live in a world in which we are extremely busy and pulled in different directions and if it is not made to be a priority in your life, you will never "find" the time to work out. So for me, I like to work out first thing in the morning so that I know that time will not be interrupted. I wake up about two hours earlier than I need to, but I know that is the only way to make sure that I can get it in and then I feel great the rest of the day. The other key for me is to truly only compare myself to myself. There are so many people that are so much faster and stronger than me, but I know if I just keep showing up then I am better than I was yesterday and that is all that matters.

How do you prepare for an APFT?

I add in a lot more interval training to my routine. I try to maintain my APFT events throughout the year. However, when I am about a month out from my APFT I focus on intervals, or lower reps at higher intensity. I like the Tabata format for my push-ups and sit-ups, and then work in 400 meter and 800 meter runs. High intensity training is what really conditions your body to do more repetitions or run 2 miles in the shortest amount of time.

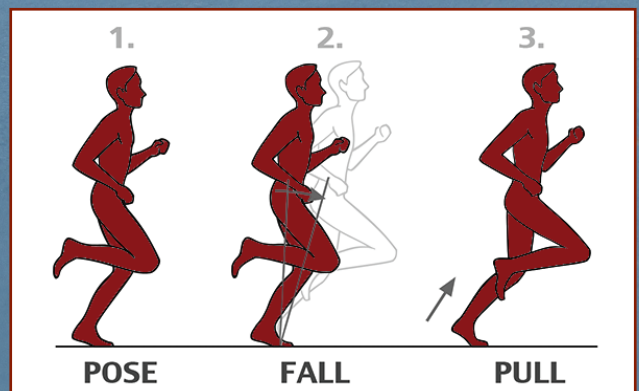
How is the instruction you gave on running at AXE important?

I believe that the running instruction at the AXE Camps is extremely important for all runners because it is proven to cause less knee, hip and ankle injuries, and can help someone to run faster or longer.

The POSE method of running is a more effective way to run using less energy. When done correctly, it actually forces your body to move at more steps per minute, thus, resulting in a faster run. For a Soldier, being able to run is imperative not only to pass our physical tests, but to be able to react in combat and have the stamina to perform during training events. Even as we look to transitioning to the new ACFT, running is still a large element of the test and I do not see that ever going away.

What is your background in physical fitness?

I am an Army Master Fitness Trainer, but I have played sports as long as I can remember, and continued all the way through school. It gave me the tools to be successful once I joined the National Guard. Physical fitness is just something that has always been a passion of mine in my personal time.



Airmen, Soldiers improve aerial port interoperability



By Maj. Allison Stephens

More than 130 members of the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Contingency Response Group joined the U.S. Army's 690th Rapid Port Opening Element to participate in Operation Huron Thunder, a U.S. Transportation Command exercise held at Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center in Alpena, Michigan in July.

The exercise was designed to test the rapid assessment and airfield opening capabilities of contingency forces and establish a Joint Task Force-Port Opening — a complete logistics hub and surface distribution network, said Col. Bruce Bancroft, commander of the 123rd CRG. Airmen were responsible for establishing an aerial port of debarkation, which receives and stages cargo arriving by airlift. The Soldiers simultaneously established a ground transportation network, shuttling cargo away from the airfield to a forward node

Although the APOD and the forward node are set up separately, interoperability is key to mission success, Bancroft said. In-Transit Visibility systems and joint communications are a crucial mission set between the geographically separated areas.

"The importance of interoperability with the Army cannot be overstated," Bancroft said. "Our success on the airfield is directly tied to the RPOE's ability to keep cargo flowing to the

forward node, and this exercise demonstrates the absolute reliance we have on each other to make the mission happen."

One thing the Kentucky Air Guard brought to the exercise was extensive experience operating JTF-POs in the past, Bancroft added. This experience allowed the Airmen and Soldiers to quickly streamline operations and share best practices.

For example, Soldiers from the 690th RPOE began the mission by carrying two radios — one to talk with the forward node and the other to talk with commanders at the APOD. This inefficient system was soon corrected by Master Sgt. Kyle Goins, a communications specialist with the 123rd, who was able to reconfigure the radios so only one

was needed.

This on-the-job training was very valuable for Staff Sgt. Rhonda McQuay, a signal NCO from the 690th RPOE, based at Ft. Eustis, Virginia.

"I know this was a learning experience, and I can apply what I learned here to future operations," said McQuay, a native of Madisonville, Kentucky.

The 123rd CRG's experience with JTF-POs was readily apparent to Maj. Brett Dunning, commander of the 690th RPOE

"You can tell the 123rd CRG members have been working together for a long time, and they're helping to instruct my less-experienced soldiers," Dunning said. "An example of this is downloading cargo directly to flat-rack trucks so they don't have to handle the cargo twice as it transfers to the forward node."

"We've been involved in the JTF-PO mission for 10 years and have been recognized for multiple best practices," Bancroft noted. "The opportunity to work with the 690th has been invaluable, and the information exchange was superb."

The Kentucky unit is the only contingency response group in the Air National Guard. It was recently honored as Air Mobility Command's 2017 Contingency Response Unit of the Year.



Army Band takes gig in Germany



By Sgt. Cody Cooper

Soldiers of the 202nd Army Band provided support for the United States Army Europe Band in Sembach, Germany July 2018. The purpose of the 202nd's annual training was to carry-out band mission requests while the Sembach-based Europe Band was assigned abroad.

"We have had a large variety of missions that we have performed, in which we have had a cultural outreach with our host country of Germany," said Chief Warrant Officer Gregory Stepp, the 202nd Army Band director.

The 202nd performed nine events during their time in Germany; the performances consisted of six military performances and three in local communities. The band performed as a marching band, a brass quartet, honor cordon, rock band "Fallout" and Single Barrel Brass Band. For a month, Soldiers of the 202nd took the stage as ambassadors of Kentucky and the U.S. Army.

"This is a great opportunity for us because this gives us an opportunity to carry out a mission in a different environment and it gives my Soldiers a chance to experience German culture as well as allow them to share some of our culture with a different country," said Stepp.

Soldiers in the unit had the chance to travel the country as well, with memorable

stops in Bonn, Cologne and Heidelberg. Some destinations were appropriate to the musical unit, such as Sgt. 1st Class Steven Thompson's trip to fulfill a longtime dream.

"For years I have wanted to visit the Beethoven House in Bonn," he said. "The experience was both humbling and overwhelming. As a musician, it's a must-see."

Whether the Soldiers of the 202nd are stateside or abroad, they are always constantly performing for audiences.

"This annual training has been an incredible experience because we are getting paid to do what we love and we are able to add a sense of importance to the events that we perform at," said Sgt. Brain Ewalt, an instrumentalist with the 202nd.

Being in a military band allows Soldiers to serve their country in a unique way. They also gain invaluable experiences that civilian musicians may not receive. Staff Sgt. Kate Walsh knows this all too well. As a lead singer for the rock band, the numerous stage

appearances from Kentucky to a village in Germany have allowed her to develop into a sought after vocalist.

"The Army band has given me the opportunity to sing professionally in an environment with professional musicians, and now I have been given a chance to move forward and sing for the West Point band," said Walsh who will soon be moving from the 202nd to the West Point Band at the U.S. Military Academy.

Thompson said the entire unit shared similar sentiments of the mission, one they won't soon forget.

"Not only were we afforded the opportunity to travel overseas and provide support for military ceremonies. We were also able to share our music, and culture with people in surrounding towns. The interactions with our hosts were nothing short of amazing, and we appreciate the graciousness, generosity, and good will we received from them. To say the experience was good, would be an understatement."



KICKING TIRES

Guardman discovers defect, DOD makes changes for safety

By Stacy Floden

Warning: death, serious injury or damage to Army equipment will occur if actions specified are not implemented. That was the Safety of Use Message (SOU) sent out this spring across all branches of service, including Active, Reserve and National Guard.

Just in the Kentucky National Guard alone, more than 1,200 tires have been damaged. Nearly 50% of the Humvees were involved and almost every unit in the commonwealth affected. Tires on 290 vehicles would need to be replaced due to cracks in the tread. Nationally, in the Guard, over 32,000 wheel assemblies have needed to be replaced.

The message stated, any vehicle and trailer equipped with the specified tires which may exhibit sidewall cracking can lead to a tire failure and must be removed. The failures in the tire increase the risk of a sudden blow-out with immediate loss of air pressure, accident or rollover which could result in serious injury or death.

Chief Warrant Officer Stephen Plouvier with the 203rd Forward Support Company was the first to recognize the issue. With his concern for Soldier safety, he identified tires with cracks and nearly all of them were over five years old. He brought the concern to the Surface Maintenance Office (SMO). The staff began detailed research and began collecting data and took it straight to the United States Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command (TACOM). TACOM then began their own research and it was decided all wheel assemblies and tires over five years old would need to be replaced.

"The mechanics and employees turning the wrenches find a lot of these issues, it's up to us as managers and supervisors to listen and look at the problems and weed through what they are telling us to find a solution," said Plouvier, surface maintenance mechanic supervisor. "The way the tire blew out and pattern of damage that occurred just looked odd. After further inspection I noticed some cracks in the tire that did not look right, I looked at a few more tires of the same make and found the same type of cracks occurring in

other tires with similarities in the locations of the cracks."

Nationwide, numerous Humvee accidents and blowouts have occurred and may have been attributed to the defect. Leadership within Kentucky's logistics office were impressed with the findings and grateful for the concerns for safety in the field.

"I couldn't be more proud of the way our SMO staff recognized the seriousness of this issue and pushed TACOM to look at the tires. I am convinced by doing so they have saved lives and potential damage to government equipment DoD wide," said Col. Jim Covany, director of logistics. "When I say SMO staff, I mean every Soldier in the maintenance community. We could not have accomplished this task without every single

dry rotting or cracking, similar to the cuts found in the blowouts. Similar traits were discovered. More than 150 mechanics and 14 shops across the state began the daunting task of inspecting the tires and replacing those deemed unserviceable.

"We recognized there was a limited number of wheel assemblies in the Army inventory," said Lt. Col Steve Engels, surface maintenance manager. "With annual training season fast approaching, we knew we had to act quickly to not interrupt the annual training schedule."

The tire problem was discovered in April and by mid-May a SOU from TACOM was published and Kentucky continued to move forward with the replacement of tires.

"We are building readiness and we did not want our units unable to train. The only way to do that

was to get these tires replaced," said Engels. "We were around 75% completion rate when the SOU came out. It was extremely important for us to get out in front of this. This saved our annual training season."

As a busy training season was in full swing, units in the field reported no major issues with their vehicles. Kentucky's largest brigade, the 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade conducted an intense field training exercise with more than 1,000 Soldiers and nearly 300 vehicles.

Lt. Col. J.B. Richmond, deputy commander of the 149th said the unit's annual

training was unhindered because Col. Covany's staff were proactive and anticipated the tire impact months before. "This, in concert with the aggressive approach to fixing the tire issue allowed Kentucky to conduct the AT season on schedule and as planned."

While the cracks may have been small, Engels stressed the importance of the discovery and the results of a lot of hard work.

"Ultimately, we're talking about Soldiers' lives," he said. "I believe that two things were achieved in carrying out the plan that was put together, ensuring Soldiers were taken care of and that units were still able to train and maintain their readiness." 🇺🇸



mechanic on board. What they did in a little over a month was change over 1500 wheel assemblies."

Soldiers drive various types of equipment during the week and the vehicles are very heavy and can do a lot of damage if a tire blows or there is an accident.

"A hard left or right and the Soldier loses control, not only is the Soldier and passengers at risk of injury, but that minivan with a family of four driving down the road trying to live their lives as well," stated Plouvier. "Basically I felt it was my responsibility to keep raising awareness about what I believed to be a manufacturing defect in the tire."

The Kentucky Guard requested all shops complete an inspection of 100% of all tires to find

OPERATION BOBCAT

By Lt. Col. Dale Greer



Airmen, Sailors provide free medical care to Eastern Kentucky

Marita Moore came bearing gifts.

The Beattyville resident arrived here at Lee County High School on Wednesday with trays full of homemade cookies, brownies and fudge. It was her way of saying “thank you” to the Air National Guardsmen and U.S. Navy reservists who set up health-care clinics in four Eastern Kentucky communities this month to train while serving local residents with no-cost medicine, dentistry and eyeglasses.

A Navy dentist extracted 12 of Moore’s teeth in one sitting last week so she can have dentures made and restore her smile. She’s been needing them for a long time but didn’t have the money to pay for care.

“I’m just really grateful for what they did for me,” Moore said, her eyes filling with tears. “I lost my insurance a few years ago and can’t afford to go to the dentist. Last year, my husband had a stroke, so we’re trying to bounce back. But it’s been hard.”

Moore was so pleased with her care that she brought in eight other family members for dental work, eye exams and glasses.

“This clinic has been a Godsend,” she said. “The community needed it, and I thank God for their help.”

Moore is one of 2,662 patients who received over \$1 million worth of no-cost health care at the four clinics from June 15 to 24 as part of a mission called Operation Bobcat.

During those 10 days, doctors, dentists, optometrists and medics from the Air National Guard and U.S. Navy Reserve performed 11,275 procedures and handed out 1,457 pairs of no-cost prescription eyeglasses, according to U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Amy Mundell, the mission’s officer in charge.

Neither insurance nor identification were required, explained

Mundell, a medical administrative officer with the Kentucky Air National Guard’s 123rd Medical Group, which served as the lead military agency.

“The primary purpose of Operation Bobcat is to provide military medical troops with crucial training in logistics and field operations so they’re better prepared to respond to real-world emergencies, conflicts or disasters,” Mundell explained. “At the same time, they provide direct and lasting benefits to the residents of Eastern Kentucky.”

“Servicemembers get hands-on readiness training with deployable equipment that enhances their capabilities when mobilized, and local residents get access to high-quality health care at no cost to the individual. That’s a win-win scenario for everyone.”

Planning for Operation Bobcat began nearly two years ago, but the mission truly got underway June 13, when 167 Air National Guardsmen from 40 states and Navy reservists from across the nation arrived here to join an advance team of 33 troops. They immediately began unpacking 30 tons of medical gear and support equipment to set up clinics at Breathitt, Estill, Lee and Owsley County High Schools. The team even brought its own communications networks and food services personnel capable of serving nearly 8,000 meals throughout the mission.

“This is a huge undertaking to get 200 people and 30 tons of equipment here from across the country,” said U.S. Air Force Maj. Brett Ringger, an optometrist from the Texas Air National Guard’s 136th Airlift Wing. “It doesn’t just magically come together. It takes a lot of planning and logistics to get it done. So that provides a key training opportunity.”

Another important aspect of the mission is the ability for troops to train with portable, deployable equipment, Ringger said. Some of the medical and dental gear used during Operation Bobcat is unique to deployed

environments. The optometry instruments and dental equipment, for example, are designed for use in field settings and may be unfamiliar to servicemembers who have only used standard equipment at their home stations.

“This is equipment that we normally don’t get to use very often,” Ringger noted, “so being able to train on it here helps prepare us in the event that we have to use the same equipment while responding to a disaster or contingency operation.”

As important as the training was — more than 13,361 hours accomplished — the mission’s most rewarding aspect may have been the opportunity to serve the residents of Eastern Kentucky.

“The patient population here is one that’s chronically underserved,” said U.S. Navy Cmdr. Walter Schratz, a dentist from Expeditionary Medical Facility Bethesda in Maryland and Operation Bobcat’s assistant officer in charge.

“Some of these patients have traveled for hours to visit one of our sites and receive care. It was a privilege for our practitioners to serve someone who needs a painful tooth extracted or a new pair of glasses so they can see clearly.”

Ringger told the story of one patient who had gone for years without new glasses because he was wheelchair-bound and couldn’t fit his chair in an optometrist’s examination room.

“Here, we use portable equipment, and the patient was able to wheel himself right into position, allowing him to get new glasses and see clearly for the first time in a decade,” he said. “Just giving someone a simple pair of glasses can change their life.”

U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Jay Ross said Operation Bobcat was especially rewarding because it helped meet one of his long-term personal goals — to serve those who lack access to quality care.

“I went into dentistry to serve the underserved,” said Ross, a dentist from Expeditionary Medical Facility Camp Pendleton in California, where he also operates a civilian dental practice.

“I don’t mind being in private practice, and I like working with people who can afford good dental care. But it’s something else to serve patients who simply don’t have access for whatever reason. It’s what I love to do.

“I’ve had two patients here literally cry because we took out their diseased teeth and they were able to move on from that. It’s an amazing experience when a patient cries and hugs you because you’ve made a difference for them.”

Ross told the story of another patient for whom he extracted all her teeth because of irreparable disease.

“Before, when she looked in the mirror, she saw a mouthful of decay. Now, she’ll be able to get a denture, and when she looks in the mirror she’ll see a beautiful smile. In my private practice, all I do is drill and fill. Here, I’m extracting diseased teeth and improving the quality of life for people who have no access to care. If it’s possible, I just want to do missions like this from here on out — it’s been that great an experience for me.”

One of many patients who lacked access to dental care was Damon Parker of Beattyville. Parker came to the Lee County clinic to have a painful tooth extracted by U.S. Navy Cmdr. David Carneiro. The tooth had been causing so much pain that Parker was popping Advil for weeks just so he could sleep at night.

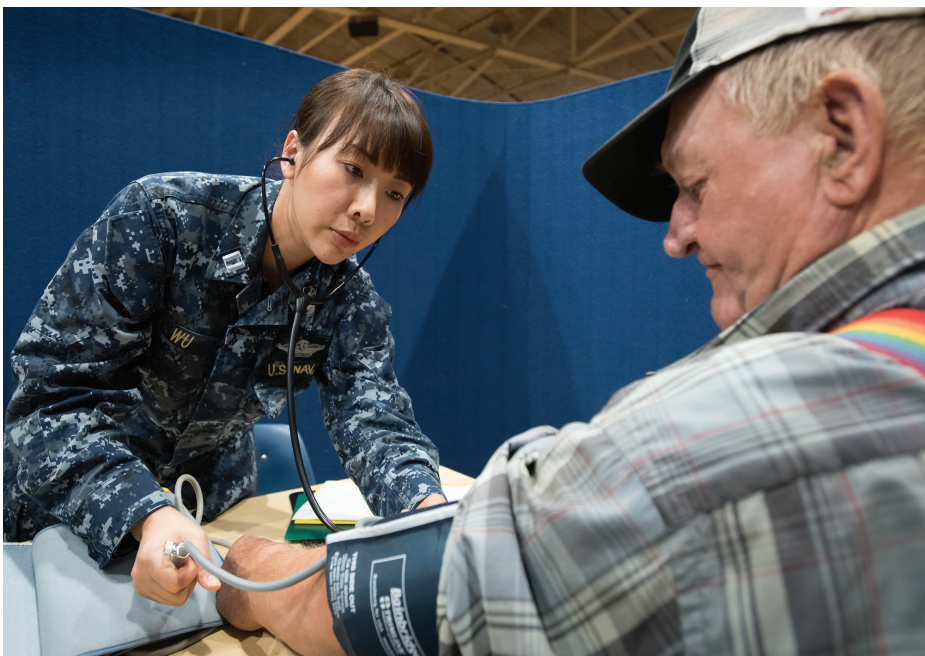
“It was getting pretty bad,” Parker said of the tooth. “We lost our insurance a couple of months ago, and there was no way I could

afford to go to the dentist to have anything done. I really appreciate what you guys have done,” Parker added, struggling to maintain his composure. “Everybody has just been so nice and friendly and helpful. It’s done a lot to help the people out here.”

For Mundell, serving fellow Kentuckians like Parker makes the mission especially satisfying.

“I am a Kentucky Air Guardsman, so it’s a great experience for me to be part of a mission that offers needed care to so many underserved residents in my own state. It’s tremendously gratifying to know that the work of our doctors and dentists has allowed a patient to see clearly for the first time in a decade, relieved chronic pain or literally given someone their smile back.”

Mundell noted that the mission would never have happened without support from the Department of Defense, which funds and supplies efforts like Operation Bobcat through a program called Innovative Readiness Training. Equally supportive have been the mission’s local partner, the Kentucky Department for Local Government, and the



communities and school boards of Estill, Jackson, Lee and Owsley Counties.

“We worked very closely with the Department for Local Government, the local school boards and the high school facility managers to make this mission happen,” Mundell said. “The schools in particular have been kind and gracious to allow us to come in and operate out of their facilities. Without that kind of community support, we wouldn’t have been able to do any of this.”

While clinical operations ended Sunday, the mission has not. Troops still have to pack up their gear and redeploy to their home units.

Schratz says he will travel home with a feeling of true accomplishment.

“It really was a wonderful opportunity to participate in this mission,” he said. “When I was first asked to be a part of Operation Bobcat, I thought a lot about what it would be like to serve this community, and it has far exceeded my wildest imagination.

“The people have been very gracious and appreciative, and I feel the same could be said about what we’ve experienced, too. This has been one of the best experiences of my military career.”

READ FULL STORY AT KENTUCKYGUARD.COM



MEDEVAC CREWS TRAIN TO SAVE LIVES

By Staff Sgt. Benjamin Crane

UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters, from Detachment 1, Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 238th Aviation MEDEVAC flew over the skies of Eastern Kentucky from Cave Run Lake to the Red River Gorge, performing simulated rescue missions with the help of members of the Jessamine County Fire Department and Wolfe County Search and Rescue, July 23-Aug. 6, 2018.

The missions included rooftop rescues, water rescues and cliff rescues, everything done to prepare for the time that real lives are in danger and in need.

This is the first time the unit has operated in this region of the state for training with the chance to use the more difficult terrain to their advantage.

"The work we do with these local agencies is in case of a natural disaster or any kind of rescue situation," said Staff Sgt. Jeremy Lowe, senior crew non-commissioned officer in charge. "It falls in line with our war time mission as

well, using our crews and our critical care paramedics and exercising pretty much everything we do in in a war time situation or peace time mission."

Giving the Soldiers more hands on experience was a goal that leadership had set out to provide when planning this training.

"We moved a lot of equipment, we pumped a lot of aviation gas, set up a TOC (Tactical Operation Center) multiple times, multiple convoys and we flew quite a few missions," said Capt. Jonathan Strayer, commander of the MEDEVAC Detachment. "Everybody got training on their job. To me, part of insuring everyone receives good training is giving them that "TV commercial" that got them to come in. Everybody enlisted for a reason and it's my job to make sure they are doing that."

Not only did they get some exciting "commercial" action in training, there was unscripted, real-life action that came their way as well.

According to Strayer, the unit received a phone call from Wolfe County Search and Rescue during the first week of training, to dispatch a helicopter to

assist them in an actual search and rescue. Having been an available, ready asset helps build trust with the civilian agencies that will be calling on them.

"It has opened up the gates to what we will actually be capable of doing in the very near future since we have created that bond and they know that we are there for them," added Strayer.

Building relationships with local fire departments and search and rescue teams is imperative for the unit, as they will be working hand-in-hand with them when they are called upon to help with state missions.

"It's very important, especially in the MEDEVAC community," added Lowe. "We are the only asset in the state of Kentucky that the National Guard owns with the means of lifting these patients out."

Firefighters with the Jessamine County Fire Department and technical rope rescue members with Wolfe County Search and Rescue volunteers were used as safeties and also played the simulated victims that needed rescue. Their participation was beneficial in showcasing how the Guard unit works and allowed them to get experience working together.

"This training is highly needed," said Michael Hackett, deputy chief, Wolfe County Search and Rescue. "Not only to have the camaraderie but we know what each other can do because as soon as you're under the conditions of night, a loud helicopter and multiple people, ropes and wind, you have to know what the other person can do, can't do, what they need to do, and vice versa."

The area's mountainous terrain was one of the reasons Charlie Co. decided to train in the region and saw the most benefit for those involved.

"Our patients are usually up here in the back country," said Hackett. "Most often our problem is getting them to the hospital in a timely manner. With the Guard unit coming out and the training here today, we are hoping to provide our visitors or ultimately those who become a victim or a patient a

more narrow window from time of incident to time of care."

The rocky terrain presents many challenges to the crews but the skilled hands of the pilots, who fly the Blackhawks, turn an impossible situation into a manageable one.

"There is definitely a lot of challenges (for the rescues)," said 2nd Lt. Drew Myers, maintenance section leader and pilot with the unit. "Especially when you get out on the bluffs and the cliffs. You get a lot different air than when you are trying to hover over an airfield with steady air. You really have to adjust the controls and keep it steady especially with someone hanging off the hoist."

He added that with recent technology inside the helicopter, maneuvering the aircraft is made a little easier but still takes a lot of communication with his crew.

"It's going to pay in huge dividends," said Strayer. "The folks in our unit worked hard this past two weeks, everybody brought something to the table and made it a success. There are not enough positive things I can say about the Soldiers in our unit or even the folks with the Wolfe County Search and Rescue, Jessamine County Fire (Department) and all the civilian agencies we worked with. Everyone involved got a lot of training value out of it."

NOTE: The Kentucky National Guard's MEDEVAC assets may be called upon in the state of Kentucky after all other local & state resources have been exhausted. Typically civilian MEDEVAC (based throughout the Commonwealth) are the first responders to an incident with other state agencies, like the Kentucky State Police, providing initial support in missing persons.





RIVER ASSAULT

2061st MRBC plays crucial role in multi-component exercise

Story by Spc. Nasir Stoner; Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Scott Raymond

“We bridge the gap, that’s what we do,” said Spc. Timmy Barnes of the 2061st Multi-Role Bridge Company. “We’re just one small piece of the puzzle, but we’re here to do our job.”

Soldiers with the 2061st participated in River Assault 2018, a multi-component exercise on the Arkansas River near Fort Smith Ark., July 25. The Guardsmen worked with active duty, reserve and Marine Corps units to build a bridge over the Arkansas River. River Assault is an annual event, but the first time the 2061st has been a part of it.

“We are conducting a joint operation with the reserve component, active component, Marines and aviation,” said Capt. Cody Lasseigne, commander of the 2061st. “We are the only Guard unit here. We’ve been showing our colors and trying to make Kentucky proud.”

Nearly 1300 soldiers came together for this

exercise to build an Improved Ribbon Bridge across the Arkansas River. The bridge, which covers nearly 1300 ft. is designed to provide a river crossing for ground forces and heavy equipment.

“Today, we’re teaming up with the other units to do a full enclosure, from shore to shore,” said Spc. Tyler Browning, a bridge crewmember of the 2061st. “Our unit is only a few years old and this is our first full enclosure, and we’re right in the middle of it.”

River Assault is one of the largest Army Reserve engineer training exercises each year. Coordination of the event falls to alternate Reserve engineer commands.

Lt. Gen. Charles D. Luckey, commanding general of the US Army Reserve was on hand to view the event. Luckey said in his 40 plus year service, he hadn’t personally seen such interoperability on the river.

While an Army Reserve-led event, Luckey didn’t refer to it as an Army Reserve event. “We pretty much have everybody here working together, which is great,” he said.

Luckey, along with other Reserve and Marine leadership staffs visited the troops on the river, including the 2061st, the newest group in the mix. “I am very impressed with their proficiency they’ve developed in such a short period of time,” said Luckey.

Even in a short two years, the 2061st has amassed a large inventory of equipment, necessary for their mission. For River Assault, the unit traveled from Kentucky to Fort Chaffee, Arkansas with nearly 180 pieces, including Common Bridge Transporters, interior bridge bays, MK2 bridge erection boats and boat cradles.

Most of the equipment are older, “hand-me-downs” as some Soldiers call them. But that doesn’t keep the unit from successfully completing their part of the mission. Thanks primarily to the 2061st’s mechanics.

The 2061st Maintenance Platoon worked quickly and diligently to ensure River Assault went well. They were available and ready to fix any leaks, breaks or mechanical issues that would slow the mission down.

“We’ve been at Fort Chaffee for nine days now, putting in some long hours,” said Sgt. Richard Young, a mechanic of





the 2061st. “Part of our mission here was to make sure our Soldiers on the river have their equipment up and running so the bridges get built. Anytime something breaks we’re here to fix it.”

Some repairs were done on the water with mechanics fixing boat engine issues while still lashed to the bridge, but for more serious fixes, it was a short drive back to Fort Chaffee. There the mechanics had an automotive repair unit, body and fabrication repair unit, an automotive shop and weld shop all ready to meet the repair needs of the boats and trucks.

“The amount of sacrifice and dedication these mechanics have to keep the mission going is nothing short of amazing,” said Sgt. 1st Class Justin Wininger, platoon sergeant of the maintenance platoon. “The whole platoon has been busy, but they’ve kept the mission going.”

To span the river, the 2061st trucked their boats and interior bridge bays to the river and launched the bays. A boat would then tie up the bay and drive it out into the river to meet up with other bays. There a bridge crew would be waiting to attach each bay. The 2061st was assigned 10 bays to assemble. Once all the pieces were together, the boats would then push the bridge up river to meet up with a bridge of the Army Reserve’s 729th MRBC from Granite City, Ill.

The Soldiers then waited for the Marines to deliver their end of the bridge, which had been airdropped by Ch-47 Chinooks earlier in the morning.

Upon completion, ground forces would cross the river in the final stage of the assault mission.

River Assault 2018 was the largest exercise yet for the young Kentucky bridge unit. Soldiers of the unit earned the admiration

of other units and demonstrated true interoperability.

“I’m extremely proud of all the hard work and effort the 2061st Soldiers have put into their training and these exercises,” Lasseigne said. “It really shows how you can come together for an operation as if we were overseas and be successful, regardless of the task.”





SENIOR LEADERS VISIT DJIBOUTI

By Maj. Gus LaFontaine

Twenty summers ago, I enlisted in the Kentucky Army National Guard. While I prepared to begin Initial Entry Training, my unit, the 2123rd Transportation Company, participated in Operation Nuevos Horizontes (Operation New Horizons) in Ecuador, South America. Upon return from basic training, I recall listening to the compelling stories that came from this collaborative mission. I admit, there was some envy as I listened to fellow truck drivers talk about transporting equipment on the South American continent. For a kid from small-town Berea, the grandiosity of trekking across a foreign country was hard for me to comprehend. The thought of participating in such a mission was exciting. However, it wasn't to be that summer. My enlistment was one year late.

Fast forward 20 years. I've since had many opportunities to "trek across foreign countries" in this uniform. Recently, I returned from Djibouti, Africa where I accompanied a contingent of Soldiers and Airmen from the Kentucky National Guard. The delegation visited with military leaders, diplomats, and government officials from the eastern African country.

Like the mission in Ecuador twenty years ago, the mission to Djibouti was part of the State Partnership Program (SPP). The State Partnership Program began in 1993 as a Department of Defense effort to leverage the National Guard component of each state to cultivate relationships with foreign countries. One goal of these partnerships is to extend the influence of the United States throughout the world.

Currently, 74 state partnerships stretch across Europe, Central and South America, Asia, and Africa. Kentucky continues to enjoy the partnership with Ecuador that enabled Operation Nuevos Horizontes. At 22 years, it's one of the longest partnerships that's existed in the state partnership program. In 2015, Kentucky became state partners with Djibouti. The African country, which is approximately the size of New Jersey, strategically sits at the Horn of Africa.

Former Secretary of State and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell recently said, "Diplomacy is listening to what the other guy needs. Preserving your own position, but listening to the other guy. You

have to develop relationships with other people so when the tough times come, you can work together."

Kentucky's most recent visit to Djibouti captured Powell's sentiment. Kentucky's Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Stephen Hogan and Chief of Staff, Brig. Gen. Benjamin Adams used the visit to invest in relationships with their Djiboutian counterparts. Discussions were held with regard about how to work together to enhance the skills of Djiboutian artillerymen, the groups collaborated to help build upon the foundation of the NCO Academy of the Djiboutian Army, and multiple meetings were held with civic leaders to reinforce existing relationships and develop new ones.

This kind of investment is yielding a mutually beneficial partnership. The capabilities of their Army is strengthening. Our regional presence is solidifying. A shared path is serving both parties. The Kentucky National Guard's efforts with the Djiboutian military are gaining momentum, and friendships.

Per General Powell, when the tough times come, Kentucky will be positioned to work together with our world partners. 🇺🇸



SABER STRIKE

By Staff Sgt. Benjamin Crane

Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 623rd Field Artillery's Alpha and Bravo Batteries were flown from Poland to Lithuania for a rapid air insertion exercise with their High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) during Saber Strike 18, June 12.

The mission was to showcase the unit's ability to deploy their powerful rocket system to any location necessary to make a rapid insertion.

Two HIMARS trucks were loaded into a C-17 Globemaster from the 437th Airlift Wing out of Charleston, South Carolina, two at a time, and flown from Powidz, Poland to Rukla, Lithuania. Once on the ground, the batteries performed dry fire missions to test their ability to communicate and position themselves to fire on a target and move out of harms way.

"We saw an opportunity with the massive amounts of Air Force support that this exercise had to take advantage of. The challenge was finding the right people to see how important this mission was to do," said Maj. Steve Mattingly, commander of the 1/623rd.

Being able to show a small unit in the National Guard could send a platform like this and land it in any airfield to strike an enemy's area of operations was a very big message to be sent Mattingly said.

"It's very strategic and significant" said Brig. Gen. Scott A. Campbell, Kentucky Army National Guard assistant adjutant general who paid the 1/623rd a visit during the exercise. "It's a powerful message we are sending to our adversaries."

This training opportunity took the help of other military branches willing and able to participate, such as the 437th Airlift Wing.

"The stars aligned where all the commanders asked to be involved saw that helping in this mission would be beneficial to all parties and allowed the units to work hand in hand in the spirit of the exercise," added Mattingly.

This training also gave the Soldiers involved real life experience of what it takes to get placed right in the middle of the battle. Also, the experience of riding in a C-17 sitting right next to their 35,000 pound vehicle as the very large aircraft takes off in what could be likened to any roller coaster at an amusement park.

"It is a good opportunity to load their equipment in one country and land in another country and shoot a mission," said Mattingly.

Saber Strike was a Multi-National U.S. Army-Europe led exercise where this cooperative training event is designed to enhance readiness and interoperability with allies and region partners. The enhanced forward presence battle groups that took part in Saber Strike were stationed in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. It was the first time the 1/623rd had deployed all their equipment overseas since Operation Desert Storm.





Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017

THE “FOREVER GI BILL”

OVERVIEW

This law allows more veterans and service members to qualify for the GI Bill, and allows more time to use it. Some of the changes go into effect immediately, and some go into effect at later dates as listed below.

EFFECTIVE 16 AUGUST 2017:

Delimiting Date Removed - If a service member's last day of Active Duty is on or after 1 January 2013, their Post-9/11 GI Bill will never expire. This also applies to spouses (if transferred) and Fry Scholarship for deaths on/after that date.

Reserve Education Assistance Program (REAP) - If a service member lost eligibility for REAP (Ch. 1607) due to the REAP Sunset, they may now convert unused months to the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Independent Study Programs - If a service member is eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, they can now use GI Bill benefits for Independent Study programs.

EFFECTIVE 1 JANUARY 2018:

Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA) - The MHA for students who use their Post-9/11 GI Bill for the first time on or **AFTER** this date will increase or decrease with BAH rates, but students who used their Post-9/11 GI Bill **BEFORE** this date will not have MHA decreased if BAH decreases.

EFFECTIVE 1 AUGUST 2018:

Qualifying Periods of Service - Title 10 Sections 12301(h), 12304a, and 12304b are qualifying service for Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Transfer of Education Benefit (TEB) - Service members can re-transfer Post-9/11 benefits if the original dependent dies on/after 1 August 2009, even after the service member separates. Dependents can re-transfer Post-9/11 benefits if the transferor dies on/after 1 August 2009 and they have remaining months.

Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA) - MHA is based on campus where attending, is pro-rated, and may be paid for days in a month the service member is not serving on active duty.

Purple Heart Recipients - Purple Heart recipients eligible at 100% payment tier.

Yellow Ribbon - Fry Scholarship and Purple Heart recipients eligible for Yellow Ribbon Program.

License and Certification - Entitlement charge for License and Certification tests are pro-rated.

Institution Closures - Service members may recover some benefits when the institution they are attending closes on or after 16 August 2017.

Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance - Students using Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (Chapter 35) who enroll after 1 August 2018 are limited to 36 months of benefits. Payments under Chapter 35 increase on 1 October 2018.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment - Title 10, Sections 12304a and 12304b are qualifying service for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Chapter 31).

EFFECTIVE 1 AUGUST 2019:

Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship - Up to 9 months added to benefits after exhausting Post-9/11. Maximum payment is \$30K. Cannot be transferred.

EFFECTIVE 1 AUGUST 2020:

Payment Tiers - 40% payment tier is eliminated. 90 days to 6 months of service eligible for 50% payment tier. 6 to 18 months of service eligible for 60% payment tier.

OTHER CHANGES:

VA High Technology Pilot Program - Opportunity to enroll in high tech programs. VA determines eligible skills and training based on employer input. Can use Chapters 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 1606 or 1607.

Work Study program continued.

Schools must report whether they allow priority enrollment for Veterans.

For More Information:

Visit www.benefits.va.gov/gibill

Contact the ARNG Education Support Center at:

(866) 628-5999

arng.gsc@mail.mil

nationalguard.com/education

Contact the KYNG Education Office at:

(502) 607-1138

matthew.p.boone2.mil@mail.mil

A large military tank is being transported on a flatbed trailer. Two soldiers in camouflage uniforms are standing on the trailer, one of whom is holding a camera. In the background, another similar tank is visible on a separate trailer. The scene is set outdoors on a paved area with trees in the background.

ARMOR RETURNS TO KNOX

By Staff Sgt. Benjamin Crane

Soldiers with the Ohio Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 145th Armored Regiment off-loaded almost 30 military tanks and fighting vehicles that arrived by train July 19, 2018.

The package unloaded includes fourteen M1A1 Abrams tanks, ten M2/M7 Bradley Fighting Vehicles and three M88A2 Hercules Recovery Vehicles.

"Basically, armor is coming back to Kentucky," said Maj. Justin Watts, deputy Supervisory Surface Maintenance Specialist at the Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site (MATES).

The move helps out the Ohio Guard Soldiers by giving them more time for hands-on training with more training area to work with while cutting down the distance that the unit usually had to travel to Minnesota, which is a 30-hour bus ride to

and from Ohio.

"We're bringing some armor back to Knox," said Master Sgt. Nathaniel Ketchum, 145th's battalion master gunner. We are trying to facilitate and improve our training ability because in previous years we've been training in Minnesota and it's a long ride there and back; this move will really help us maximize our IDT (inactive duty) training time."

Another benefit of bringing the vehicles down from Minnesota to Kentucky will be the weather. Trying to get to your tank in two feet of snow and having to chip out ice to get to your turret hatch during the winter isn't any fun for the Soldiers.

Also, the larger training area will allow the units to do more than maneuver training.

"Here they will be able come in and do their complete gunnery requirements," said Capt. Eric Green, officer in charge at MATES.

For the Kentucky National Guard, this move allows the vehicle maintainers at the MATES facility an opportunity to work on their skills and show what kind of high standard work they can do. This also has the potential to bring in more jobs for Kentucky Guard Soldiers.

"This brings an added level of relevance to the Kentucky Guard to enter into a relationship like this with another state, said Lt. Col. Steven Engels, Supervisory Surface Maintenance Specialist at MATES. "It produces a lot of potential for future packages if we maintain this equipment well."

That is something echoed by the senior leadership for the 145th as well.

"In the future, we are looking at bringing the rest of our tanks and Bradleys down here if the facility works as well as we think it will," added Ketchum.

ARNG 4.0

TRAINING REFLECTS NEW CONCEPT, EVOLUTION IN NATIONAL GUARD

By Sgt. 1st Class Scott Raymond

The National Guard has remained an ever-evolving organization. 1636, 1792, 1861, 1916, 2001 are a few specific years marking critical changes in America's hometown defense force. How the National Guard fits into the battle rhythm of active duty forces as well as maintaining its own state's mission has always been in flux. In 2017, a new term, Army National Guard (ARNG) 4.0 was introduced, spelling out goals of increased readiness and capabilities to answer the demands of the total Army concept and the dual role of the National Guard.

For the Kentucky National Guard's largest brigade, ARNG 4.0 was at the top of the operational order for this year's annual training (AT).

Nearly 1,100 Soldiers of the 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade descended upon the Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center (WHFRTC) in Greenville, Ky., for their usual AT. Only this year, it was not business as usual.

"This AT was certainly unique," said Sgt. Dustin Mullins, protection NCO with HHC, 149th. "It definitely felt like we were on deployment. The brigade trained much closer together and the tempo was much faster."

According to the Army National Guard, units across the nation must aim to create a force that is more capable for the Army, better resourced and more responsive domestically within each state. The 149th MEB looked to answer this by asking more from its Soldiers; Deploy to AT, hit the ground running, face a live, thinking, hybrid threat and sustain their operations in a demanding environment.

Lt. Col. James Richmond, 149th deputy commander said the planning guidance from Col. Alexander Stewart, (MEB commander) for the AT was to make it austere, realistic, and immersed in U.S. Army Forces Command's (FORSCOM) "Big Six". The "Big Six" capabilities

are shoot, move, communicate, medicate, sustain, and decontaminate.

"With this guidance, we developed a concept skeleton that exercised all the elements of the MEB in their core tasks," said Richmond. "We made it austere by deploying the units straight to the field on the first day of AT and staying there until the last possible day. This allowed us to 'play till the whistle blows.' The result was an arduous training exercise over 13 days that required night, CBRNE, tactical coms, real-world medical, and survivability operations."

That intent from the top filtered down to surprised but prepared battalions and companies who were not used to such an immersive AT. Maj. Joseph Fontanez, administrative officer with the 103rd Chemical Battalion said his troops adapted quickly to the changes, leading to a successful AT.

"Our Soldiers really enjoyed the challenge of getting back to basic Soldiering for an extended mission," said Fontanez. "We have skipped home station training for more time in the field and it is working. Training like this is so beneficial for us as a unit and as a combined force."

Fontanez believes the rules of the game are changing and the U.S. military is adjusting to the requirements of the operational and domestic environments.

"This AT is the start of a significant change in our culture as a professional force," he added.

Maj. Gen. James K. Brown, deputy commanding general, Army National Guard, FORSCOM paid a visit to the MEB during training in Greenville, June 19. From touring a decontamination site with chemical Soldiers and breach operations with engineers to base security with MPs, the MEB's leadership showcased their Soldiers' abilities to Brown, along with Kentucky's adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Stephen Hogan. Brown said he was impressed with the "snapshot" of the MEB he witnessed at WHFRTC.

"I saw professional Soldiers from Kentucky training in the field, doing what great Soldiers are supposed to be doing," said Brown.

FORSCOM's mission is to train and prepare combat-ready, globally responsive forces in order to build and sustain readiness to meet combatant command requirements. Brown said the MEB's training is precisely what

is needed to support the Army and Federal mission as well as the state mission. The ARNG 4.0 concept aims to increase standards across the Army National Guard.

"ARNG 4.0 is a place we are as a Guard, where we are across the nation and where we've evolved as an operational reserve for the U.S. Army. (ARNG) 4.0 is exactly what I saw today, Soldiers training to the standard, standards that the Army has set for us and being as ready as we possibly can be within the available time."

With approval from FORSCOM and approval from Soldiers in the field, the 149th MEB now looks to

sustain such success and share the lessons learned with other commands in Kentucky. ARNG 4.0 is called a "paradigm shift in how we train, equip, and allocate personnel to prepare for the future." The 149th is satisfied with their first significant training adjustment.

"Col. Stewart's end state was the three T's – Trained, Tired, and Toughened. And I'm pretty confident we achieved each," said Richmond.





HIGH TEMPO AT FOR 149TH MEB

By Sgt. Taylor Tribble

In recent years, most units of the 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (MEB) have conducted annual training at the company or the battalion levels. However, the 149th commander Col. Alexander Stewart said this year's more collective training exercise in June at the Wendell H. Ford Training Center was different.

"The purpose of any MEB is to provide support to combat forces on the battlefield ensuring lines of communication remain secured and open for resupply," said Stewart. "This allows the commanders of the combat forces to maintain momentum in the fight and defeat enemy forces."

Every battalion in the brigade worked together and used each other's strengths to complete the missions that were mandated to them.

"The 149th MEB units excelled in demonstrating their ability to move, shoot, communicate, decontaminate, medicate and

sustain in a demanding environment," said Stewart.

With "ARNG 4.0" announced at the beginning of this fiscal year, Army National Guard units are tasked with keeping a higher level of readiness. This is not a program, but rather the future of the ARNG. It increases the training tempo and make units more readily available to mobilize to meet the needs of the operational environment.

"I like the high tempo training," said Spc. Courtney Whitehouse with HHC, 149th. "It makes me realize how I have to think quickly and remain on my toes."


With more than 1000 Soldiers on ground for this exercise, training consisted of decontamination operations, combined arms breaches, detainee operations, and traffic management. Each battalion worked together to excel in the missions pushed down to them.

"When I get to do chemical stuff, I get really excited," said Pvt. Hanna Hendricks with the 103rd Chemical Battalion. "This is my first annual training and I really enjoyed it!"

In addition to this training, incoming brigade commander Col. Joseph Gardner established a division higher headquarters to "test the 149th MEB against a live, thinking and hybrid threat," said Lt. Col. James Richmond, deputy commander of the 149th.

Gardner also created a live opposition force and an observer, coach/trainer team to test their capabilities.

"Being with the OPFOR is one of the most fun things I have ever done," said Pfc. Ken Smith with the 207th Engineer Company.

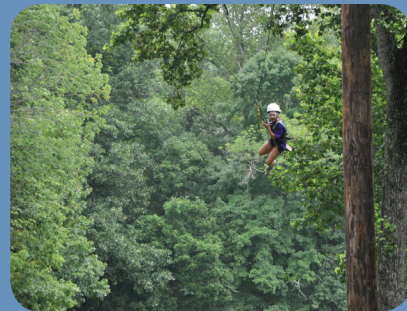
This annual training has increased the readiness of the 149th MEB and will conclude with a change of command ceremony welcoming Gardner into command. 

DID YOU KNOW?

Retirees have a new **Dental/Vision insurance option**. The Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) replaces TRICARE. Retirees must select new plan by DEC. 10, 2018. Call your Family Assistance Specialist for more info.
1.800.372.7601

Step 7: Download the Mango app from your phone's app store and start learning!





Kentucky National Guard YOUTH CAMP



Find more photos from Youth Camp on our flickr site: www.flickr.com/kyngpao



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Marathon & Biathlon are physically demanding sports. Interested Soldiers & Airmen should be in exceptional physical condition with no flags or profiles. Prospects will be required to participate in several team training events and meetings prior to competing nationally

IT'S TIME TO START TRAINING